

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9488

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 0183

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJ: JANUARY 9 - A QUIET ANNIVERSARY

REFS: (A) STATE 213950; (B) PANAMA 6286; (C) PANAMA 6739;
(D) PANAMA 0077; (E) PANAMA 0102

SUMMARY: AS ANTICIPATED, THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
JANUARY 9, 1964 RIOTS HAS PASSED QUIETLY AND WITHOUT
INCIDENT. THAT IT DID SO WAS DUE TO PANAMA'S RESOLVE TO
IN NO WAY DISRUPT THE PROGRESS OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS.

END SUMMARY

1. A DATE LONG RECOGNIZED AS PREGNANT WITH VIOLENT ANTI-
AMERICAN POTENTIAL, THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JANUARY 9,
1964 RIOTS, WAS INSTEAD A DAY OF PEACEFUL, EVEN SOLEMN,
COMMEMORATION. OFFICIALLY DECLARED A DAY OF NATIONAL
MOURNING IN MEMORY OF THOSE PANAMANIAN WHO DIED IN 1964,
SHOPS AND OFFICES WERE CLOSED AND FLAGS FLOWN AT HALF-
STAFF. THE PUBLIC MOOD WAS RESTRAINED AND THE DAY PASSED
UNMARRED BY VIOLENCE OR CONFRONTATION.

2. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE OCCASION WAS HANDLED BY THE
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GOP WAS CLEARLY INTENDED TO PRECLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF

INCIDENTS WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S. THE MEDIA WAS MUTED IN ITS BUILD-UP, THE ONLY SCHEDULED EVENTS WERE MEMORIAL AND CULTURAL IN CHARACTER AND THE MOST LIKELY SOURCE OF SPONTANEOUS VIOLENCE -- LEFTIST STUDENT LEADERS -- WERE "INVITED" OUT-OF-TOWN (REF E) BY GENERAL TORRIJOS. ANOTHER POTENTIAL FOCUS OF TROUBLE, THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF PEASANT SETTLEMENTS (CONAC), WAS SIMILARLY NOT ALLOWED TO CHARGE THE ATMOSPHERE. INDEED, WHILE THE GOP HAD NO REASON EITHER TO DESIRE OR EXPECT TROUBLE, IT TOOK EVERY PRECAUTION TO INSURE THERE WOULD BE NONE.

3. COMMENT: THAT TORRIJOS WOULD NOT CONDONE ANY ACTIVITY ON JANUARY 9 THAT MIGHT DISTURB OR IN ANY WAY JEOPARDIZE U.S.- PANAMANIAN RELATIONS IS A REFLECTION OF PANAMA'S SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRESS OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND ITS GROWING CONFIDENCE IN THEIR OUTCOME. THE POSITIVE MOMENTUM ACHIEVED DURING AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S FIRST VISIT, THE PRESIDENT'S WELCOMED FRANCE FIELDS ANNOUNCEMENT, AND AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S MOST RECENT VISIT ON THE EVE OF THE JANUARY 9 ANNIVERSARY HAVE GOTTEN TREATY NEGOTIATION OFF TO A START EXCEEDING ALL EXPECTATIONS. THEY HAVE ALSO GIVEN TORRIJOS THE INCENTIVE AND CONFIDENCE TO CONTAIN WHATEVER PRESSURES THERE MAY HAVE BEEN TO VIOLENTLY VENT PANAMA'S FRUSTRATIONS AGAINST THE CANAL ZONE ON JANUARY 9.
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